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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release April 26, 1984

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am sending to the Congress today four separate bills to attack the pressing and urgent problem of international terrorism.

In 1983 more than 250 American citizens were killed in terrorist attacks, the largest number in any year of record. In the wake of the tragic deaths of our diplomats and Marines, as well as French and Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, in light of the cynical murder of four South Korean cabinet officers and many others by North Korean terrorists in Burma, and as a result of the attack on our embassy in Kuwait, it is essential that we act immediately to cope with this menace and to increase cooperation with other governments in dealing with this growing threat to our way of life.

In the past fifteen years, terrorism has become a frightening challenge to the tranquility and political stability of our friends and allies. During the past decade alone, there have been almost 6,500 terrorist incidents. Over 3,500 people have been killed in these incidents, and more than 7,600 people have been wounded. American citizens have been the victims of more than 2,500 terrorist incidents. Of special concern to me has been the toll inflicted on our diplomats and members of the Armed Forces. I am also deeply concerned, however, about attacks against other American citizens, who have been the victims of forty percent of the terrorist incidents over the past decade.

In recent years, a very worrisome and alarming new kind of terrorism has developed: the direct use of instruments of terror by foreign states. This "state terrorism," starkly manifest in the recent dreadful spectacles of violence in Beirut, Rangoon, and Kuwait, accounts for the great majority of terrorist murders and assassinations. Also disturbing is state-provided training, financing, and logistical support to terrorists and terrorist groups. These activities are an extremely serious and growing source of danger to us, our friends and our allies, and are a severe challenge to America's foreign policy.

The protection of our citizens, our official personnel, and our facilities abroad requires the close cooperation and support of other governments. We depend on other governments to provide security protection to more than 250 United States diplomatic and consular posts abroad. We look to other governments to maintain the normal protections of law in their countries for our citizens living and traveling abroad and for our business representatives and business properties.

In 1983, this Administration sent to the Congress legislation to enable us to provide adequate protection for foreign officials in the United States. Not only is their protection essential to meet the obligations of the United States under international treaties, it is equally important to demonstrate to officials of other governments that they can count on full protection while they are in the United States.

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I also asked the Congress to provide legislative authority for anti-terrorism training, and in some cases equipment, to foreign governments in order to enhance cooperation with governments on whom we must depend for protection abroad. In my view, the more effective and knowledgeable local law enforcement officials and officers are, the greater will be their ability to provide the kind of security both they and we need. I commend the Congress for providing a two-year authorization for this program and an appropriation of $2.5 million for 1984.

I am determined that my Administration will do whatever is necessary to reduce the incidence of terrorism against us anywhere in the world and to see that the perpetrators of terrorist acts are brought to justice. I believe it is essential, however, that the Executive branch, the Congress and the public clearly understand that combatting terrorism effectively requires concerted action on many different fronts. With trained personnel, effective laws, close international cooperation, and diligence, we can reduce the risks of terrorism to our people and increase the deterrent to future acts of terrorism.

Dealing with the immediate effect of terrorist violence is only part of the challenge, however. We must also assure that the states now practicing or supporting terrorism do not prosper in the designs they pursue. We must assure that international forums, such as the United Nations, take a balanced and practical view of who is practicing terrorism and what must be done about it. We must assure that governments that are currently passive -- or inactive -- respecting this scourge understand the threat that terrorism poses for all mankind and that they cooperate in stopping it. We must work to assure that there is no role in civilized society for indiscriminate threatening, intimidation, detention, or murder of innocent people. We must make it clear to any country that is tempted to use violence to undermine democratic governments, destabilize our friends, thwart efforts to promote democratic governments, or disrupt our lives that it has nothing to gain, and much to lose.

The legislation I am sending to the Congress is an important step in our war against terrorism. It will send a strong and vigorous message to friend and foe alike that the United States will not tolerate terrorist activity against its citizens or within its borders. Our legislative package consists of four separate bills, each of which is outlined below.

o Act for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Hostage-Taking

In September 1981, I signed the instrument ratifying the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, which was adopted by the United Nations on December 17, 1979. The convention has not been implemented domestically through enabling legislation, however. This legislation would implement the 1979 convention. It would amend the Federal kidnapping statute to provide for Federal jurisdiction over any kidnapping in which a threat is made to kill, injure, or continue to detain a victim in order to compel a third party to do or to abstain from doing something. This is a common ploy of terrorists. At the time I signed the instrument of

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ratification, the Congress was informed that the instrument of ratification would not be deposited with the United Nations until enabling legislation had been enacted. To demonstrate to other governments and international forums that the United States is serious about its efforts to deal with international terrorism, it is essential that the Congress provide the necessary enabling legislation, so that we may fully implement the Hostage-Taking Convention.

o Aircraft Sabotage Act

The United States became a party to the Tokyo Convention, which covers certain offenses or acts committed aboard aircraft, in 1969 and the Hague Convention, concerning the suppression of unlawful seizure of aircraft, in 1971. The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation was adopted at Montreal in 1971 and ratified by the United States in November 1972. The Montreal Convention requires all states party to it to establish jurisdiction over certain offenses affecting the safety of civil aviation.

The Congress has approved enabling legislation for the first two of these conventions but not for the Montreal Convention. This means that certain criminal acts related to aircraft sabotage or hijacking are not adequately covered by United States law. This gap in the law sends a false signal to terrorists, and it also indicates to other governments that we may not be as serious as we should be, and as in fact we are, in our efforts to combat international terrorism. Action by the Congress now would provide the basis for long-overdue implementation of this convention.

o Act for Rewards for Information Concerning Terrorist Acts

Current law authorizes the payment of rewards for information concerning domestic crimes but is outdated. Maximum rewards are inadequate, and terrorism is not specifically included as a basis for paying a reward. Moreover, there is no authority for the payment of rewards for information on acts of terrorism abroad.

The proposed legislation, which is modelled on an existing statute that allows payment of rewards for information concerning the unauthorized manufacture of atomic weapons, recognizes that payment of a reward in connection with acts of domestic terrorism raises a matter of law enforcement that is properly within the jurisdiction of the Attorney General, but that the payment of a reward in connection with an act of terrorism abroad poses a political and foreign relations problem within the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State. By increasing the amounts of fines that may be paid, and by authorizing rewards for information concerning terrorist acts committed abroad, this Act would markedly improve the ability of the Departments of Justice and State to obtain information leading to the freeing of hostages or the capture of the perpetrators of acts of terrorism. In passing this legislation, the Congress can further underscore the intent of the United States to take every appropriate and necessary step to protect its citizens and property from terrorist acts.

o Prohibition Against the Training or Support of Terrorist Organizations Act of 1984

The training and support of terrorist groups and activities by a number of countries has reached alarming proportions. In addition, the number of states now using terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy is both increasing and highly

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disturbing. The provision of assistance to countries that support terrorism and use terrorism as a foreign policy tool has thus become a matter of grave concern to national security. This Act, together with revised and strengthened regulations that the Department of State intends to issue shortly, would enhance the ability of the Department of Justice to prosecute persons involved in the support of terrorist activities and of states using terrorism. Enactment of this legislation would be a strong contribution to the effort to combat terrorism.

We must recognize that terrorism is symptomatic of larger problems. We must dedicate ourselves to fostering modernization, development, and beneficial change in the depressed areas of the world. We must renew our commitment to promoting and assisting representative and participatory governments. We must attack the problem of terrorism as a crime against the international community whenever and wherever possible, but we must strive to eradicate the sources of frustration and despair that are the spawning places and nutrients of terrorism.

The legislative proposals that I am sending to the Congress today will, when approved, materially benefit our Nation and help us to assist friendly countries. I believe that they are extraordinarily important, and I strongly urge that the Congress undertake their timely consideration and speedy passage.

RONALD REAGAN

THE WHITE HOUSE,

April 26, 1984.

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